1:Du Bois E-5 (1938-1939) 1944
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CHILDREN AND THEIR PROPERTY

Parents have no scruples about appropriating anything a child may have, or about treating it carelessly at the same time that they admit the child's ownership of the property. This is in marked contrast to the rigidly scrupulous attitudes of some other nonliterate peoples such as certain American Indian tribes. Repeatedly I gave children small gifts, ranging from candy to a tin container, only to see these gifts in the hands of an adult a few minutes later, while the child stood by without source of redress. One of the major difficulties in using free-play techniques was that adults could not be kept from joining the children and appropriating the toys. As young people begin producing or acquiring property of greater value in adult eyes, this situation becomes more acute. (See Chapter 6.) A quarrel between two boys over a bow illustrates several aspects of this situation.

Pululang, a boy of about fourteen, gave his bow to an uncle, who promised to mend it for him. When it was mended, the uncle handed the bow to his son instead of returning it to his nephew. The son in turn loaned it to a playmate, who broke it beyond repair. When the nephew discovered what had happened he went to the house of the boy who had broken the bow and seized his bow in compensation—a thoroughly adult procedure. The two boys came to blows and soon both were bellowing with rage and pain. Adults took a hand in separating them and suggested various compromises, which the enraged boys both stubbornly refused to accept. Adult relatives became sufficiently excited to begin snatching the bow from each other's hands. At this point two neutral observers rushed in, seized the bow, and broke it into pieces.

Fantan the interpreter, who was one of the two neutral observers, commented afterward that they would not have dared to break the bow in this fashion if two adults had been quarreling, but instead everyone would have taken sides and tried to settle matters by compromise. Trivial as this incident is, it illustrates not only the helplessness of children in protecting their own property, but also the peculiar harshness toward growing children that manifests itself repeatedly in teasing, ridiculing, frightening, and beating, as well as in a certain contemptuous highhandedness where their property interests are concerned.

As harshness may take the form of confiscating children's property, so solicitude may manifest itself in giving them gifts. A minor gift of meat in the name of boys at feasts has already been mentioned. The loincloth, the symbol of status, is another gift children receive from

1:Du Bois E-5 (1938-1939) 1944
OFS Also OFS

In this connection it is quite remarkable to observe the collapse 763
into inertia that accompanies most internal illnesses. A person suffering 758
from headache, cold, influenza, diarrhea, or similar illness will mope
hopelessly in the house and be quite sure he is going to die. Kin usually
rally around the sick person with a good deal of concern, and divinatory 755
causes are immediately sought. If these are unfavorable — and there is
never any thought of concealing the results from the patient — the de-
pression is naturally heightened. The patient will sit in the dark, smoke-
filled house without bathing, often refusing food, and getting no exercise
or fresh air for days at a time. These factors, particularly when combined
with a depressed state of mind, gave me the impression that it is quite
possible for certain Atimelangers to die with insufficient physical cause.
When the watchers hear the death rattle, they say of the person, "His 763
breath string is broken; already his dying is finished (*beaking tila nik;
sasa mami hangri*)." Failing a death rattle, the cessation of heartbeats
and of breathing are also considered criteria of death.

In addition, a prolonged disintegration of normal conscious person-
ality such as occurs in delirium or coma is also considered the equiva-
lent of death. Signs of animation are thought to be simply manifestations
of an evil spirit who has caused the death and has now possessed himself
of the body. There is always a good deal of fear and distaste associated
with such a situation. Under such circumstances the advisable thing to
do is bury the body as expeditiously as possible. As a result people are
occasionally buried whom we would consider still living. At least
two such cases occurred in eighteen months, and Rilpady's autobiog-
raphy gives a singularly matter-of-fact account of a near fate of the
same sort. When this concept was discussed with informants they re-
lated cases of people who still talked, but who were so dead that their
flesh had begun to rot away. From an Atimelanger's point of view this
is quite possible, since sick people never bathe or move from their sleep-
ing mats in the dark and often filthy living rooms. Under such circum-
stances any lesions could rapidly develop into extremely noxious infec-
tions.

The relation of such a concept of death to trance states is worth 756
considering. Among the seers of Atimelang it is assumed that in curing- 758
séances their tutelaries perch on their shoulders and speak through their
mouths. The seer is supposedly unaware of what he is saying. This
might sound like a true trance condition. My observations, however,
lead me to suppose that seers were far from being in deep trances. Their
eyes were open, their movements and speech controlled and coherent,
and their muscular tone normal. Supernatural phenomena seem to be
the result of obvious sleight-of-hand tricks, which appear singularly

1:Du Bois E-5 (1938-1939) 1944
OF5 Alor OF5

If the hypothesis made so far about the test of aggression [illegible]—
ising aggression is correct, and if, on the other hand, society offers means, such as wealth, to externalize aggression, self-inflicted death is not likely to be a highly developed personality trend. This alone might explain the absence of institutionalized suicide. In addition, when death may result from extranormal personality states, such as occur in delirium, coma, and insanity, it becomes clear why spirit possession is an evil and why shamanistic trances and intoxication have not been selected for social emphasis.

INSANITY

Before continuing with ideas of burial and death, it may be appropriate to develop somewhat parenthetically such other data as are available on insanity. What precisely constitutes insanity in the mind of the Arimelanger is as hard to define as it is among ourselves. The history of a "crazy" woman was given on page 1078., and it will be recalled that essentially the charge was one of prostitution. Lakamau the Simpleton was also called crazy. There was one woman, usually fairly quiet, who seemed to have hallucinations and whose chief claim to peculiarity in the minds of local people was that she would run off alone and spend the nights hidden in the fields rather than return to the house. She was considered possessed of a spirit. She and the first woman were the only two recognized by the community as insane (*lira*). In addition there were many people whose "spirits would rise in them," which meant that they had occasional attacks of hyperexcitability and about whom one said, "They are crazy," using the term in the same loose and often good-natured fashion in which we use it.

Also available were anecdotes about four other insane people no longer living. The case of Fanueni has been quoted. The other three cases were all characterized by greater destructive vigor; all were considered spirit-possessed and their destructive attacks seem to have broken out suddenly. For instance, Matingmale had worked quietly all day weeding her sister's fields. That night she suddenly began to beat her brother-in-law. She ran off, killed pigs and chickens, broke off corn, reached into a pregnant pig and pulled out the unborn young, and made obscene advances to men. People tied her up, but she broke away and continued her destructive activities. People shot her in the shoulder, but she went on, ignoring the arrow still stuck in her flesh. She tossed a small child in the air in play and continued to kill pigs and generally frighten people. She was finally bound securely.

Her father sacrificed to the spirit supposedly possessing her, and she was normal for about two months. Then she had another outburst in which she held her child upside down by its legs from the door hatch.

and Lakawati had a wealth-reckoning contest [in play]. They used shields of bamboo and hunted rats. They reckoned rats, and Manitui had a hundred and eighty, while Lakawati had a hundred and ninety. They also killed eight birds and civet cats, there were seven of them. They made bamboo spears and threw them. They shouted defiance at each other. We boys from Rautaug took our rat jaws [as adults use pig jaws to record the number slaughtered] and added them to Lakawati's. We reckoned with Lakawati. The older people said, "You have been playing with sacred things, so now you must make a sacrifice to the bamboo spears. Then you must not be cross with each other any more but play together nicely, eat together, and chew betel together. Don't quarrel any more." [Informant smiled broadly at this childish imitation of a serious adult wealth-reckoning contest called tatah.]

Five years later I went again to blacken my teeth, this time below Karieta. There were twelve girls and eight men. We boys hunted rats. We were there seven days. The men paid the leader thirteen arrows, and the girls cooked twelve plates of rice rolls. We ate seven of them and five were used to pay the leader.

When I was about sixteen I was crazy and sick for about a month and a half because two kinds of spirits [*kari* and *loku*] were fighting in me. The loku spirit was called Manibiki. One day I went hunting rats and passed by Fuida, where the evil spirit [*kari*] called Fuimau lived. She must have followed me. That night I went home to Rautaug and was not sick. But the next day I talked only at random [i.e., irresponsibly]. I didn't eat or drink for three days. I kept saying, "Hail to me. Hail to me. I am Manibiki. I go to my father. I go to my father." [Manibiki was the name of the male loku spirit that possessed him and that was fighting in him with the female kari spirit, Fuimau.] Maninale and Malefani both made loku medicine for me to drink. Father made kari medicine for me to drink, but I did not get better. So after five days they carried me to Alurkowati. This was because Padama of Alurkowati had a loku spirit to whom he sacrificed. They carried me in a scarf like a baby and beat a gong the whole way. I didn't feel sick, but I talked crazily. In Alurkowati Padama rubbed my body and extracted Manibiki, urging him to come out of me to eat [sacrificed] rice and chicken. Padama also pulled a bone [considered a loku arrow] out of my throat. He pulled the crazy words out of my mouth. But again I spoke wildly. Manibiki came back and said [through Mangma's mouth], "I have been extracted, but the evil spirit [*kari*] is still there."

Five different seers worked over me. They built a big fire of eucalyptus and held my eyes over the smoke to chase out the evil spirit

lcDu Bois E-5 (1938-1939) 1944
OFS Alor OFS

me. I also come from Atimolong. We shall divine and find whatever spirit is making you sick." So they divined and hit a dead man and his wife. She took a chicken and some rice to feed them. Everything I wanted to eat, my mother-in-law fetched for me—sugar cane, cucumbers, rice, boiled corn, cucumbers. Whenever I said my spittle was bitter she would cook rice for me. Finally my spittle was good and I got well, so that I could go to work in the rice fields. My body was thin and my hands were all bone. [Question.] I was sick for about a month. My head ached, then my stomach ached, and I defecated only water. 59[X] [728] ●

When we worked in the rice field, we got twenty cans. Part I sold in Kolobobi, part I paid for the raising of a pig, part I gave to people so they would give me a snake, and part I carried here to help people who were making a Thlolowani feast [her lineage house].

March 15, 1933

[I asked whether she had dreamed and she said no. She didn't seem to be able to start, so I asked about the death of her mother and siblings.]

When I was about four, my oldest sister, Kolong, went to marry Lahuwee in the Alik area. She had one child and then her husband died, so she came back here. Then she married again with Fanmi of Makongfui. She called me to go with her to Makongfui. I went and stayed there. Kolong cut one field for me. She said I was to plant corn there. I was about six years old. Then I planted corn and we went together to weed. She would cook for us and feed us at noon. When the field was about half weeded Kolong got a headache and said we had better go back to mother. So we came back here. Kolong was sick for four days and then died. That same month another oldest sister married Fanmi Longhair. She lived with him two days and died. [She stopped. I asked how she died.] She went to fetch wood. She met an evil spirit with a hair cylinder, just like a human being. The evil spirit slept with her, but she said it hadn't. [Who did she think it was?] She thought it was Maiwani, son of Talkalitza, now dead. [Question.] The proof that she had slept with the evil spirit was that she was dead in two days. Then mother said we couldn't stay in Feha any more because all the children were dying, and we had better go to Old Atimolong. There we stayed with Lampala. He was very clever at hunting; rats and geezing meat at feasts, so that there was always meat hanging over the fireplace. Mother thought we had better not go on living there, because we children always kept looking at the meat and people might be angry. In their